3:Stern E-4,5 (1949-1957) 1965 NR 10 Klamath NR 10

[Klamath Reservation]

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often seemed to take the school for granted as just another of the rights granted them in the treaty of 1864.

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For their part, whites often ignored the contributions made either on behalf of the Klamath or directly by them toward school support. Tribal parents tended to see in the school bureaucracy another manifestation of white surrogacy. Even at the time when an Indian—a non-Klamath employed at the Agency—was elected to the presidency of the PTA, the large majority of tribal members declined to join that body. On other occasions, students elected a tribal member and an Indian president of the senior class. Notwithstanding, issues which arose from time to time convinced some Klamath parents that the schools were racially biased. Although restive, they confined themselves to individual action, in angry criticism, occasional arguments with teachers, and rarely in assaults upon a teacher or principal.

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In the Chiloquin grade school, most of the teachers were the wives of local men, having a comparatively long residence in the area and a familiarity with local conditions. At that level, the curriculum was largely undifferentiated and a policy of social promotion was followed. Consequently, the grade school offered conditions for a smoother adjustment than did the secondary school. Even so, truancy was more substantial among tribal children than white, and the imposition of discipline, often interpreted by indignant Klamath mothers as an expression of prejudice, was hedged with difficulties.

It was in the junior high school that the frictions rapidly mounted. Here, and increasingly in the high school, the modest educational assets—the two schools in 1950-51 had a combined staff of nine teachers—were strained by contending demands for both vocational training and a college-preparatory curriculum. With subject specialization, a professionally oriented teaching staff, composed primarily of men who had been hired from outside the area, dominated the school. Individually, they tended to be less permissive toward their students than their fellow teachers in the grade school. Promotion in high school was upon merit. Meanwhile, as students attained puberty, they came to be increasingly aware of the significance attached by their elders to racial differences. Disciplinary problems now mounted, and so did dropouts. The truancy rate (1956-57) for white children

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[Klamath Reservation]

in seventh and ninth grades—the beginning grades respectively for junior high and high school—was less than half the figure for first grade in the same year. For tribal children, by contrast, the figures for the advanced grades were each almost twice as large as that for the first grade.

On an average, roughly one-half the small number of Klamath children entering high school could be expected to graduate. That this record was not to be attributed to a difference in intellectual ability is intimated by the results of California mental maturity tests which, as administered to Klamath children as a whole at the fourth grade, yielded normal scores, averaging 96.9. When, however, the same children had reached the eighth grade, their average score had declined to 80.4.[6] A sharp drop in incentive had taken its toll.

The stresses within the school fell unequally upon Klamath boys and girls. Athletic prowess and artistic ability—both often conceived as racially innate and as masculine attributes—offered the boys legitimate avenues to social approval. At puberty, however, Klamath girls were often beginning to develop the physical massiveness that is so frequent in their racial constitution, but that at the same time is foreign to American ideals of beauty. Some bore their lot with dignity and poise. Others courted a fleeting favor through promiscuity or took out their resentments in direct assault upon rivals or upon substitute figures. Direct violence against whites occurred in the schools at about this age, and most frequently involved girls. Still others sought alternatives outside the school, dropping out entirely, going away to vocational schools, or entering into early marriages.

Indeed, for many of the tribal youth—boys as well as girls—confronted by a school experience that grew increasingly irrelevant as they became older, it was merely a matter of "serving time" until they gained release by attaining the age of eighteen. Many Klamath tended to marry young, and there were incentives peculiar to their position. For a girl striving to escape the pressures and dissatisfactions of home life, the regimen of caring for younger siblings, and the boredom and vexation of the school, the importance and security of being a newlywed possessed a fairyland appeal. For the boy, the trust fund accumulated by the Agency for each minor, amounting in some instances to